

The complaint

Mr W complains about Barclays Bank UK PLC's handling of his attempted current account switch, and its refusal to honour the £200 switch incentive. Mr W said Barclays failed to advise him correctly about the account type and eligibility and refused to log his complaint.

What happened

On 17 November 2025 Mr W attempted to open a Barclays current account and initiate an account switch via Barclays app, as required to obtain the £200 incentive payment. He said the app repeatedly failed and said to call Barclays. And he was then told to attend a branch.

But at the branch, Mr W said he was told he needed an appointment. When he returned staff opened a basic current account and completed an account switch. He said he wasn't told a basic account is ineligible for the switch incentive or that this must be completed via the app. Mr W said he repeatedly asked whether he needed to do anything else and was told "no."

Mr W complained it was impossible for him to meet the offer criteria. He said Barclays told him it acted correctly under the terms and he was only relaying a concern not a complaint. Mr W said his experience of being passed around with contradictory information caused him significant emotional distress. He said Barclays failed the Consumer Duty and a fair outcome should include the £200 incentive and compensation for his distress and inconvenience.

Barclays responded that it had told Mr W his application for an account was rejected based on his credit file and referred him to the branch if he still wanted to open an account. Barclays apologised that its staff gave Mr W forms to complete the switch in error as he was not eligible with only a basic current account. Barclays explained that its staff wouldn't have known Mr W was only eligible for a basic current account, until the application was made.

Barclays also apologised that it only recorded Mr W's complaint as a concern and changed this since, and for its poor service on a call with Mr W on 21 November. Barclays said Mr W called to complain and cancel the account switch, but the call took longer than usual. Barclays apologised for its overall poor service and paid Mr W £100 compensation.

Mr W wasn't satisfied with this response and referred his complaint to our service. He said the branch staff insisted he check with his credit agency because his "credit file was locked", which was preventing the switch, but this isn't possible and there was no basis for Barclays' claim. Mr W said on his third branch visit the manual switch paperwork was submitted, but at no point prior to this was he told a manual switch would make him ineligible for the offer.

Mr W said repeated misinformation and lack of clarity contributed to his ineligibility. Barclays' point that he wasn't entitled to the offer as he was only eligible for a basic current account is flawed because Barclays only decided he should have that account after multiple failures in its process. Mr W said he has excellent credit scores with all three major agencies.

Our investigator said Barclays explained to Mr W why his application was declined but then gave poor service and should pay him £50 more. She said during the call when Mr W was told his application was declined, Barclays advised he visit a branch to open an account and

Mr W said he made three visits. Had Barclays explained that Mr W needed to apply via the app, it's unlikely he would have continued. Mr W's call thereafter took about two hours.

The investigator said Barclays wrote to Mr W after he cancelled his application to say it was accepted, which caused confusion. She said Barclays had apologised for poor service but had acted in accordance with the terms of the offer and shouldn't have to pay the incentive. The investigator explained that we aren't able to consider a complaint about complaint handling as this is not a regulated activity.

Mr W disagreed with this outcome and requested an ombudsman review his complaint. He said it's unfair to rely on the account not having been opened as a basis for limiting redress as he was directed by Barclays to open a basic bank account. He said compensation of £300 would reflect the overall distress, inconvenience, and loss of opportunity experienced.

What I've decided – and why

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

It is always regrettable when we see a relatively simple process such as an account switch go wrong. I sympathise with Mr W for the frustration he experienced. It's our role to identify if a business has made a mistake and if so, look at the impact this has had on the consumer.

Barclays has acknowledged that it could have provided better service, particularly with its communication. I'm glad to see that Barclays has apologised to Mr W and offered compensation. My role is to determine whether Barclays treated Mr W fairly and reasonably in respect of his complaint issues and to decide what compensation might be fair to address any mistakes or poor service.

I have looked at the events when Mr W attempted to obtain the switch incentive. The terms of Barclays' switch offer, which were available to customers, state that, '*You will not be eligible for this offer if: You're only eligible for a Barclays Basic Current Account*', and further that the switch must be carried out via the Barclays' app. It's clear that Mr W's application was correctly declined by Barclays as he was only eligible for a basic bank account and the fact that he hadn't been able to apply via Barclays' app was less relevant. Mr W understands this but complains that he was incorrectly advised at the time.

Our investigator said that Barclays should pay compensation for its poor service but not pay the switch incentive for which Mr W was ineligible. Mr W said the investigator's reasoning relies on the fact that the account was not opened, without addressing whether that was a consequence of Barclays' admitted failings. Barclays does not acknowledge that its failings caused the switch criteria not to be met in Mr W's case.

Barclays' records show that it advised Mr W that his application for an account was declined and he was advised to check his credit file. Mr W disputes that his credit score is unsatisfactory, but it's clear that he would have been eligible for a qualifying account had he held a better credit reference.

I disagree with Mr W that he was directed by Barclays' staff to open a basic bank account and by so doing lost eligibility for the switch incentive. The records show he was advised to go to a branch for further support after having the reason for the rejection of his account application explained, and when he did so a basic bank account was opened for him.

I think Barclays reference to the branch was only in the event that Mr W still wanted an account and so did not materially affect the outcome that followed. I can see that this was misunderstood by Mr W as his intention in visiting the branch was still to obtain the switch

incentive. I think the branch referral could have been made clearer by Barclays, but it was communicated to him and was in line with the publicly available terms of the switch offer. It follows that it would not be fair for me to require Barclays to pay Mr W the switch incentive.

I have looked at the service Barclays provided to Mr W around this time and in particular its communications. I agree with Mr W it was unfortunate that on his third branch visit Barclays' staff gave him forms to apply for a bank account without further explanation. Barclays explanation that its staff wouldn't have known Mr W was only eligible for a basic current account, until the application was made, didn't help Mr W and caused him avoidable inconvenience - he cancelled the account as soon as he was aware.

Mr W requested cancellation of the account on 21 and 24 November, however, Barclays still wrote to him on 25 and 26 November 2025 confirming it had been processed and accepted. Barclays apologised for this error, which it described as due to the switch being marked as terminated, but not processed.

Barclays also acknowledged poor service during the calls with Mr W. Mr W was unhappy that his call on 24 November was disconnected and he had to call back at some length to request cancellation of the current account switch. Mr W was also unhappy at Barclays' refusal to log his complaint or issue a final response. I can see that Barclays sent Mr W its final response to his complaint on 28 November 2025, which was shortly after his complaint, and its letter included referral rights to our service.

Overall and taking into consideration the poor and repeated communications and branch visits, and Barclays' initial failure to act on Mr W's cancellation requests and acknowledged poor service, I agree with Mr W that he has been caused him unnecessary distress and inconvenience. I also agree with the investigator that a fair and reasonable reflection of the impact on Mr W would be realised by the payment of £150 compensation. This award may appear to be modest but it is consistent with those we have made in similar circumstances.

My final decision

For the reasons I have given it is my final decision that the complaint is upheld. If accepted by Mr W, I require Barclays Bank UK PLC to pay Mr W a total of £150 compensation for his distress and inconvenience. Barclays may deduct from this amount any compensation already paid in respect of Mr W's complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mr W to accept or reject my decision before 11 May 2026.

Andrew Fraser

Ombudsman